

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this application in light of the present amendment and remarks is respectfully requested. In the outstanding office action, claims 1-22 are pending in the application. Claims 1-22 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, and claims 1-3, 6-8, 10, 11, and 18-20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,540,599 to Bishop ("Bishop"). In addition, claims 1-3, 6-8, 10, 11 and 18-20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,315,576 to Neidch ("Neidch"). Claims 4, 5, 9 and 12-14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bishop in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,158,468 to Curtis et al. ("Curtis"). Finally, claims 4, 5, 9, 12-17, 21 and 22 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Neidch in view of Curtis.

In response, Applicants have amended claims 1, 3-8, 14, 16-18, 20 and 22 and have canceled claims 2 and 19. In particular, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 18 to clarify that the first inner surface of the tunnel runs along an axis that is at a predetermined non-zero degree angle with respect to a vertical axis of the tunnel. Notably, on page 3 of the office action, the Examiner has written that the axis for the corresponding structure in both Bishop and Neidch has an angle of zero with respect to the tunnel or cavity that houses the contact elements. Support for this amendment is shown in FIGs. 2-7.

With respect to the Examiner's rejections of claims 1 and 18 because "it is not clear what is meant by a 'predetermined direction,'" Applicants have deleted the term "predetermined." This change also clarifies that the portion of the pin can move in any

suitable direction during the wiping or cleaning process. The term “predetermined” has also been deleted from claims 3, 7, 8, 14, 16, 17, 20 and 22.

Moreover, concerning the Examiner’s position that it is unclear as to “how the said first surface forces at least a portion of said pin,” Applicants respectfully submit that the first inner surface does generate a force that causes the pin to move in the first direction. Applicants have amended claims 1 and 18 to indicate that the force recited in these claims refers to the first inner surface causing the portion of the pin to move along a portion of the corresponding or second connector. Similar amendments have been made to claims 3, 7, 16, 17, 20 and 22.

As can be seen in FIGs. 2 and 3 and as described on page 10, lines 20-24 to page 11, lines 1-3, the first inner surface (140) can force, for example, the elongated portion (130) of the pin (120) to move in a first direction (see the arrow in FIG. 3 for an example of this movement). This process can cause the contact surface (138) of the elongated portion (130) to move along the contact (122) of the corresponding or second connector (112), which can help remove contaminants from the pin (120) and/or the corresponding or second connector (112).

As noted above, the Examiner also rejected claims 1 and 18 because they fail to recite “the elements necessary to establish “whereby contaminants are ... predetermined direction.” Applicants have amended claims 1 and 18 to clarify that contaminants can be removed from at least one of the portion of the pin and the portion of the second or corresponding connector as the first inner surface forces the portion of the pin to move along the portion of the second or corresponding connector in the first direction. Support for this amendment can be found on pages 10-11 and in FIGs. 2-7.

In view of this amendment, the Applicants believe that claims 1 and 18 are in condition for allowance. As such, Applicants believe that the claims that depend from claims 1 and 18 – namely, claims 3-17 and claims 20-22 – are also in condition for allowance.

No amendment made was related to the statutory requirements of patentability unless expressly stated herein. No amendment made was for the purpose of narrowing the scope of any claim, unless Applicant has argued herein that such amendment was made to distinguish over a particular reference or combination of references.

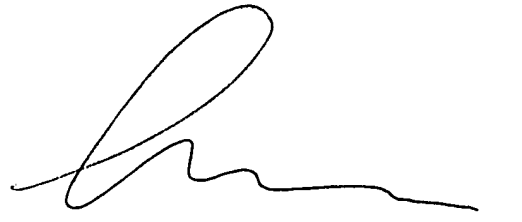
In the event that the Examiner deems the present application non-allowable, it is requested that the Examiner telephone the Applicants' attorney or agent at the number indicated below so that the prosecution of the present case may be advanced by the clarification of any continuing rejection.

Respectfully submitted,

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